



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥



S. Narain Singh Memorial Tract

EVOLUTION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SIKHS

Dr. KIRPAL SINGH

**Guru Nanak Dev Mission Series—450
Published by Guru Nanak Dev Mission, Bahera Road,
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PERFACE

This tract is being published in the memory of late S. Narain Singh who was born on 26-11-1901 at village Buta Singh Wala, Distt. Multan now in Pakistan and passed away on 2-4-1994.

On his death Prof. Kulraj Singh rightly said "A Sikh Patriarch Passes Away". He was the person who participated and contributed in all sikh developments and happenings right from 1920 including transfer of Shri Akal Takhat Sahib on 12-10-1920 to sikh representatives and then formation of S.G.P.C. He was one of those who entered Nankana Sahib just after the ghastly massacre in February, 1921. He remained Manager of Gurdwara Nankana Sahib for a long time and got constructed all the Gurdwara Sahibs there. As Manager of Nankana Sahib he got established Sikh Missionary College Amritsar and then Khalsa College, Bombay and various other Sikh Gurdwaras and educational institutions throughout the country. After partition he migrated and settled at Sanaur near Patiala and the land allotted to him and his family is now known as Buta Singh Wala. He organised Gurn Nanak Dev Mission in 1963 at Patiala with Dr. Ganda Singh as its president. During his life time being Secretary of the Mission he got published about 435 tracts and 12 books out of which 80% were written by him.

Due to his efforts number of Trusts have been established by Guru Nanak Dev Mission such as Dr. Ganda Singh Memorial Trust, Giani Dit Singh Memorial Trust, Giani Kartar Singh Memorial Trust, Bhagat Lachhman Singh Memorial Trust & Akali Phula Singh Memorial Trust. He is also one of the founders of Gurmat College in Dera Baba Jassa Singh, Patiala. He single-handedly established Gurn Nanak Dev Modern School at Buta Singhwala and donated 24 kanals of land to this school.

With his such a long and rare record of service he had acquired aura of a venerable father figure.

Every year one tract will be dedicated to S. Narain Singh in his memory and this year this tract written by a well known historian Dr. Kirpal Singh is being dedicated to S. Narain Singh.

PERFACE

Dr. Kirpal Singh, the author of this tract is a well known historian now settled at Chandigarh. He has a number of books to his credit. He retired as Professor and Head of the Deptt. of Punjab Historical Studies, from Punjabi University, Patiala and is also associated with number of other sikh institutions. This tract is a brief history of sikhs and is a remarkable contribution which will be very useful for the public at large.

Guru Nanak Dev Mission is grateful to Dr. Kirpal Singh for his permission to publish this as a tract.

Guru Nanak Dev Mission
Patiala

Evolution And Brief History of the Sikhs

It was 1469 A.D., half a century before Babur laid foundation of Mughal Empire in India and thirty years before Vasco de Gama landed at Calicut when Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism, was born in small village (about thirtyfour miles south west of Lahore, the Capital of Punjab) named Talwandi, now called Nankanana Sahib modern district Sheikhupura Punjab (Pakistan).

Early Life

Guru Nanak belonged to the Khatri Bedi caste of the Hindus. His father Kalu was the village accountant. At the age of seven, young Nanak was taken to village school under a Brahmin teacher. Subsequently he was sent to the Maulvi-a Muslim teacher. All accounts agree that Nanak impressed his teachers by his quick understanding.

Nanak's sister Nanaki was married to Jai Ram who had been appointed as *Amil* at Sultanpur, modern district of Kapurthala, then capital of Jullundur Doab. When Jai Ram came to know that Nanak was not fitting himself in any vocation of life and his parents were in great difficulty, he invited Nanak to come to Sultanpur. To great relief to the family Nanak went to Sultanpur. He was very well received by his brother-in-law who introduced him to his master Daulat Khan. Daulat Khan son of Tatar Khan subsequently became Governor of the Punjab on the death of his father near about 1504 A.D., but at that time he was living in Sultanpur, the capital town of his *jagir*. He employed Nanak as Store-keeper. Owing to great scarcity of currency the revenue was collected in cash as well as in kind. Every chief used to keep a store of food grains and it was distributed to the employees according to the fixed quantity. Hence the job of

Store-keeper was of great responsibility. Nanak worked as Store-keeper for a number of years. Here too Nanak was quite liberal to the *faqirs* and *Sadhus* who visited him. Invariably he would get permission for issue of grains to them. He also used to give his own share of food grains in charity.¹

Long Itineries

At about the age of thirty Guru Nanak set out for long itineries. He spent about twenty years on his missionary tours. It is very difficult to give a scientific account of his itineries because there are no records. However if we keep in view three factors viz., traditions, old routes which were prevalent in the 16th century and old memorial constructed by the Sikhs commemorating the Guru's visit, we can reach some reasonable conclusions.

The Guru first went towards East and South and spent about twelve years there. In east he went as far as Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa and in the South he went as far as Rameshwaram and Ceylon. The first place to be visited was Eminabad (Syyidpur) modern district of Gujranwala (Pakistan). The Guru stayed there with a poor carpenter named Lullo. During the Guru's stay a high caste Khatri official of the Government, Malik Bhago invited Brahmins and Sadhus to his house and served them with dainty dishes. The Guru was also invited but the Guru refused. When called upon to explain his conduct the Guru explained to Malik Bhago that he preferred the diet by honest earnings and did not like the dainty dishes made available by exploiting and tyrannising the poor.²

At Jagan Nath Puri in Orissa the Guru was invited by the high priest to offer *arti* to the idol. The Guru instead of accepting high priest's invitation to adore the idol raised his eyes to heaven and gave utterance to the following hymn :

The Sun and moon, O Lord, are thy

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1. *Puratain Janam Sakhi*, Khulsa Samachar Amritsar 1948, p. 16.
 2. *Janamsakhi Parampara*, Edit Kirpal Singh. Punjabi University, Patiala, 1969, p. 253. (Appendix).

lamps; the firmament thy salver; the
orbs of the stars, the pearls enchased in it.¹

Guru Nanak's next long itinery was towards the North. According to Bhai Gurdas he went as far as Kailash (Sumer) mountain. There he met a number of *Jogis* and *Sidhas* and discussed with them the problems of society. The Master told them frankly if the *Sidhas* escaped from society and hid themselves in the mountaneous recesses, they could not elevate, the society² which was suffering from so many ills.

The last itinery of the Master was towards the West. The master went as far as Mecca and Madina in Arabia.³

Last Phase of Life

After his long travels Guru Nanak founded a village named Kartarpur (modern district Lahore-Pakistan) on the bank of the river Ravi. It was here he demonstrated his own teachings. He instituted a *langar*, common kitchen where every body was fed irrespective of caste. In order to earn his living he used to work in the fields. Here he lived with his family like a house holder.

While at Kartarpur he finalised his verses which have been preserved in the *Adi Granth*, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. According to Bhai Gurdas Japji, the morning prayer of the Sikhs was composed here. *Sidh-Gosht* and *Onkar* were given the final shape. Perhaps *Bara Mala* was the last long verse which he composed at Kartarpur. According to Bhai Kahn Singh, the Master composed 947 hymns which are preserved in the *Adi Granth*.

Out of his followers the Guru chose one Bhai Lehna and nominated him as his successor and he died in 1539 A.D.

Guru Nanak shattered the barriers of caste system for the emancipation of the soul. The glorious and blissful freedom that

1. Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, P. 82-83.

2. Bhai Gurdas, Var I, Paurhi 29.

3. Bhai Gurdas, Var I, Paurhi 32 & 35.

Ramanand proclaimed to be the goal of man's spiritual endeavours had been reserved by him for first three castes. According to him *shuderras* did not deserve the grace of God. By dutiful conduct he might work his way upto another birth in which he might be admitted to the study of the Vedas which was considered indispensable for salvation of the soul. Guru Nanak denounced caste system and proclaimed that all castes were equal and there should not be any distinction of high caste or low caste. He introduced *Langar* system wherein people of all castes used to dine together. Therefore Bhai Gurdas has rightly stated that Guru Nanak levelled four castes to one.¹

Most of the *Bhagatas* believed in asceticism and renunciation of this world. They were so impressed with nothingness of this life that they perfected the forms of dissent and could not perceive the true principles of reform. It was Guru Nanak who for the first time taught that the highest worldly ambition was not incompatible with religious life. Guru Nanak preached salvation not on individual basis but on social and ethnical level. He gave the idea of holy congregation which was the elevating and ennobling force.

The protagonists of Bhagati movement were so impressed with nothingness of this life that they could not perceive the true principles of reform. They perfected the forms of dissent. "It was reserved for Guru Nanak" as Cunningham says, "to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad foundations to enable his successors to build a nationality. He gave practical effect to the doctrine that lowest was equal to the highest in creed, in political rights and in religious hopes".²

According to Payne "the seed which Nanak sowed produced richer harvest not because he expounded a nobler philosophy or preached a purer morality but because he adopted his teachings to the needs of human life, because he realized what they failed to

1. Bhai Gurdas, Var I, Paurhi 23.

2. J.D. Cunningham, *History of Sikhs*, Oxford University Press, 1918, p. 38.

realize that a religion, if it is to be a living force, must be a practical religion, one that teaches mankind not how to escape from world but how to live worthily in it, not how evil is to be avoided, but how it is to be met or overcome.”

Guru Angad (1539-52)

Guru Angad, the second Guru was born in 1504 A.D. He resumed the leadership of the Sikhs in 1539 A.D. and continued his work for about thirteen years.

The chief contribution made by him to the Sikh movement was that he gave “definiteness and distinction to the general ideals laid down by Guru Nanak. He took the sayings of his Master and got them recorded in a special script called Gurmukhi. Thus a nucleus of the Sikh scripture began to be formed giving a definite direction to the faith of disciples.”¹

The Guru died in 1552 A.D. and nominated one of his disciples named Amar Das as his successor.

Guru Amar Das (1552-74)

Guru Amar Das, the third in the apostolic succession of Sikh Gurus was born in 1479 at village Basarke (modern district Amritsar). His father Tej Bhan was a petty shop-keeper who had four sons, the eldest of whom was Guru Amar Das. At the age of twenty four he was married and had two sons and two daughters. At the ripe age of sixty two he came in contact with Guru Angad, the second Guru who nominated him as his successor. Following are some of the achievements of Guru Amar Das who led the Sikhs for twenty two years.

Foundation of Goindwal and its development : During the last phase of Guru Angad's life one Goinda represented to the Guru that he wanted to found a village on the bank of the river Beas but he had not been successful in his efforts. The Guru was moved by his request and deputed Amar Das, his disciple to help him to found the village. Amar Das went with Goinda and with

1. A Short History of the Sikhs, Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, p. 18-19.

Guru's blessings was successful in founding the village which subsequently grew to be an important town.¹ The Guru took lot of pains to develop this town and sent his nephew Sawan Mai to bring timber from the Guler state. That timber was used for construction work at Goindwal.

Construction of Bawli

Guru Amar Das decided to give to the Sikhs a central place for pilgrimage. The *Bawli* constructed at Goindwal has eighty four steps to descend to the surface of the water and it is believed that whosoever would have eighty-four dips after reciting *Japji* would be saved from the cycle of transmigraton. There has been a controversy with regard to the year of construction of *Bawli*. According to Sarup Das, Bhai Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh the hindrance of water of the *Bawli* was removed exactly at the time when Akbar the Mughal Emperor conquered Chittore, the famous fort of Rajasthan². The siege of Chittore was started by Akbar on 23rd October, 1567 and the final conquest was made on 24th February 1568.³ Accordingly, the *Bawli* would have been completed in February, 1568. But the modern researchers like Bhai Kahn Singh, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh are of the opinion that *Bawli* was completed in 1559 A.D.⁴

Twenty-two Bishoprics

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.), the founder of Sikhism travelled far and wide and wherever he went he established congregation or *Sangat*.⁵ That was the technique of his missionary work. Consequently the congregations were scattered

1. *Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, edited Vir Singh, Vol. V, p. 1395.
2. Bhai Santokh Singh, *Gurpartap Suraj Granth*, Vol. V, p. 1541
Twarikh-i-Guru Khalsa, Language Deptt., 1970, p. 335.
3. Dr. A.L. Srivastva, *Mughal Empire*, Agra, p. 147 also Twarikh, Sujjan Rai, Punjabi Patiala 1972, p. 372.
4. Bhai Kahn Singh, *Maha Kosh*, Teja Singh Ganda Singh. *A Short History of Sikhs*, p. 22.
5. Teja Singh, *Sikhism its Ideals and Institutions*, Orient Longman, 3rd edition 1964, p. 36.

and there was no organisation to connect them with the Guru. It was therefore, felt by Guru Amar Das that the scattered *Sangats* or congregations should be organised in a system. The Guru divided his spiritual realm into twenty-two¹ bishoprics or *manjis*, as they were called. A pious and devoted Sikh was placed incharge of every bishopric and Sikhs were thus provided with convenient local centres linked with Guru. The main duty of the person incharge of the *manji* was to preach Sikhism in his territory and to keep the Guru in touch with local organisation.

Guru Amar Das showed great foresight and wisdom in selecting the person who were put incharge of different bishoprics. The list of *manjidsars* will indicate that Ala Yar, a devoted Sikh and a dealer of horses, Sawan Mal who had gone to Haripur to bring timber for building of houses at Goindwal, Manak Chand who risked his life in digging the *Bawli*, etc. were the persons, who had been tried by the Guru and entrusted with this important task. All these measures widened the field of Sikhism in an organised manner.

The Langar-An Institution of Social Equality

Guru Amar Das popularised the institution of *langar* which served meals free of cost. The Guru made it obligatory that he would not see the person who had not taken meals in the common kitchen. Accordingly all important visitors to the Guru including Akbar, the Mughal Emperor and Raja of Haripur had to go to the Guru's *langar* before seeing the Guru.

The institution of *langar* served as economic leveller as the rich Sikhs used to give provisions out of which the poor were to be fed. The high caste and low caste used to be fed side by side. In that caste-ridden society this institution gave a shattering blow to the rigidity of the caste system and paved the way for social equality.

Equality of Women

In the medieval ages in India woman was considered much inferior to man. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism had said,

1. Bhai Kaln Singh, *Maha Kosh*.

“why do you consider woman inferior who gives birth to Princes”¹ In the days of Guru Amar Das *Sati* had become very common and the women used to burn themselves on the pyre of their husbands. The Guru raised a voice against this system and advocated that the concremation of widows was inadmissible. He was also dead against *purdah* system. When the raja of Haripur with his *ranis* putting on veils came, the Guru said that women should not come by putting on veils in the congregation. Thus Guru made an effort to remove *purdah* system among the women.²

Guru Amar Das instituted three festivals and asked his followers to assemble thrice a year at Goindwal on the occasion of Baisakhi, Dewali and Maghi. This created a cohesion and cemented relationship among various members of this new society. It proved to be unifying force. Reforms were undertaken in the case of birth, marriage and death ceremonies. The Sikhs were instructed to recite the verses of the Gurus on such occasion. When himself dying he asked *his sons not to follow the old Hindu practice of calling a pandit to recite Puran or to offer barley rolls and light lamps etc. etc.* Instead recite Gurbani and remember God.

The Guru breathed his last in 1574 and nominated his successor Jethaji, his son-in-law who subsequently came to be known as Guru Ram Dass.

The verses of Guru Amar Dass are in nineteen ragas and had been preserved in the Adi Granth. He made an effort to collect the verses of his predecessors. His most well-known Bani which is daily recited by the Sikhs is *Anand Sahib*.

Guru Ram Das (1574-81 A.D.)

Guru Ram Dass earlier Jethaji, son of Hari Dass was born in 1534 at Chuni Mandi Lahore. By his earnest devotion he attracted the attention of the third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Dass and received the hand of his daughter Bibi Bhani in marriage. He

1. Guru Nanak, *Asa-di-var*, Adi Granth, page 473.

2. Macauliffe, *Sikh Religion*, Vol. II, Delhi 1959, p. 62.

stayed with his father-in-law and was closely associated with his ministry. He has written a number of hymns of the period of Guru Amar Dass which are included in the Adi Granth and are source of information relating to the various incidents of his master's life. Jethaji is said to have met Akbar the great Mughal Emperor, and impressed him. He had made himself so indispensable that he was made to succeed the Guru in 1574 A.D.

As a leader of Sikh movement his most important achievement is foundation of Amritsar. According to a tradition Akbar once visited Goindwal. He granted *jagir* to Guru Amar Dass for running the Guru's langar (common kitchen). That *jagir* was politely refused and was ultimately given to Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani and on that land present city of Amritsar was founded. According to Imperial Gazetteer the amount of Rs. 700/- was given to the *Zamindars* of village Tung to purchase the site where the town was founded. "In founding the town of Amritsar at a central place, the Guru laid the foundation of the future greatness of the Sikhs for they were enabled now to rally at a common place of worship conveniently situated both as regards distance and fertility of soil".

Guru Ram Dass founded the town by excavating a tank there which was subsequently known as Amritsar—"pool of nectar". The town was also named after the tank. According to Macauliffe the excavation of the tank was completed in the days of Guru Arjan and Guru Ram Dass could only lay the foundation of the town. But this does not appear to be correct as Bhai Gurdas, one of the contemporaries writes :

ਪੂਰਨ ਤਾਲ ਖੁਦਾਇਆ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਵਿਚ ਜੋਤ ਜਗਾਵੇ ॥

He dug the complete tank and lit the light of divine knowledge at Amritsar. In the earliest phase the town was known as Ramdaspur after the name of the fourth Guru. The site where the Guru lived is still preserved. It is near Guru Bazar and is known as *Guru ke Mahal*.

“According to Latif he was of a quiet and peaceful disposition; and his piety and devotion combined with his eloquence and energy ranged hundred of disciples around his banner.”

Guru Ram Dass seeing his end approaching went to Goindwal where he died in 1581 A.D. leaving three sons, the youngest of whom became the Guru.

Guru Ram Dass made significant contribution in the Adi Granth the Sikh scripture. He introduced nine new *ragas*. He had peculiar style of writing verses-long lines and yearning to meet the Lord. He appointed missionaries to spread Sikhism at different places. The Jats of surrounding areas of Amritsar were converted by him.

Guru Arjan (1581-1606 A D.)

Guru Arjan was born in 1563 A D. and at the age of eighteen in 1581 he succeeded his father. His succession was never to the liking of his eldest brother Pirthi Chand who was too worldly and always thought in terms of money and worldly benefits. Guru Ram Dass admonishes him in a hymn “It is sin to quarrel with him who begot thee and reared thee.”

The pontificate of Guru Arjan is very significant because he undertook the projects of far reaching importance. Following are some of his significant achievements :

1 Organisation of Masand system : The author of *Dabistan* and other writers hold that Masand or Collectors had been appointed by Guru Arjan and they used to bring offerings of the Sikhs to the Guru. But Teja Singh and Ganda Singh assert that the Masands in the earliest stage were known as “Ramdas” which clearly indicates that they were representatives of the fourth Sikh Guru and had been sent by him. However, it was left to Guru Arjan to organise this system. He asked the Sikhs that every one should pay one tenth of his income and he appointed agents to collect tithes from the faithful. That facilitated the unfailing flow of offerings to the Guru.

2. Construction of Darbar Sahib : After organising his

finances, the Guru laid the foundation of Harimandir within the tank excavated by his predecessor. By building Harimandir he added sanctity and splendour to the place and gave the Sikhs Mecca by creating central place of worship.

Bhai Salo was appointed as settlement officer who used to persuade people to settle in Amritsar. He invited traders and artisans to settle there.

3. **Foundation of Tarn Taran, Hagobindpur and Kartarpur etc. :** Guru Arjan established various centres for propagation of Sikhism. Tarn Taran, twelve miles from Amritsar was founded in 1590 A.D. and a big tank was laid out. It became capital of the tract known as *Majha* (middle land) which is considered nursery of the chivalry of the native army and home of sturdy agriculturists.

In 1594 Kartarpur near Jullundur was founded by Guru Arjan. It subsequently became an important centre of Sikhism. In 1595 A.D. in the memory of the birth of his son he founded Hargobindpur (Distt. Gurdaspur) and Chheharta near Amritsar (Distt. Amritsar).

4. **Encouragement of Horse Trade :** Guru Arjan sent a number of his followers to Turkistan to purchase horses. Thus horse trade became popular among the Sikhs. This brought several advantages. Firstly, it dealt severe blow at the stringency of caste and Hindu superstition which prevented Hindus to cross Indus. Secondly, horse trade laid the foundation of future armies of Khalsa as later on Sikhs began to be regarded as best horsemen in the northern India.

5. **Helped Peasantry by getting land revenue remitted by Akbar :** Akbar, the Mughal Emperor visited Punjab in 1597 when the Punjab was in grip of famine. According to Abul Fazal, official chronicler of the time, Guru Arjan met the Emperor at Goindwal and presented the case of the peasantry of the Punjab. Emperor accordingly remitted a portion of the land revenue for that year. This made the Sikh movement very popular among the people in general.

6. **Compilation of *Adi Granth* :** The crowning achievement of Guru Arjan was the compilation of the *Adi Granth* popularly known as *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Guru wanted to preserve the sayings of his predecessors in an authentic form. For that reason he made a lot of efforts. Guru Arjan came to know that some collection of Guru's verses were lying with Baba Mohan, son of Guru Amar Dass. The Guru sent for the manuscript. First Baba Budha was sent then Bhai Gurdas was sent but they could not recover the manuscript. Later on Guru himself went and recovered the manuscript on the basis of which previous Gurus' verses were included in the *Adi Granth*.

There are thirty six contributors whose verses have been included in the *Adi Granth*. More than half of the contribution was of Guru Arjan's own. Besides Gurus writings, he included in the *Adi Granth*, verses of Hindu, Muslims saints and saint of so-called untouchable classes. Five of the contributors were Muslims-Baba Farid, Bhikham, Satta, Balwanda and Mardana. This huge material was reduced to writing by Bhai Gurdas, maternal uncle of the Guru, at the dictation of Guru Arjan. It is arranged according to thirty one musical measures (ragas). Within each raga passages are arranged according to subject and thought. Group of hymns always begins with invocation to God. Then comes writings of the Gurus in order of succession each calling by common appellation of Nanak. Then follow the saints beginning with Kabir. Towards the end after *shlokas* of Kabir and Farid, *swayyas* are given of eleven contemporary bards who admirably sum up the characteristics of the Gurus. The book closes with epilogue called *Madavani* in which Guru Arjan says :

"In the dish are placed three things-truth, harmony and wisdom. These are seasoned with name of God which is the ground of all. Whosoever eats and enjoys it will be saved. It is a thing you cannot afford to ignore."

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan : One of the most significant events of Guru Arjan's pontificate was his martyrdom. The Guru had

cordial relations with Akbar, the Mughal Emperor who died in 1605 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Jehangir. Jehangir's son Khusru rebelled against him and fled towards Punjab. Jahangir personally pursued him. Khusru stayed with the Guru who according to Mehma Parkash served him with meals. When the Emperor came to know about this he imposed fine on him. The Guru refused to pay the fine and told the Emperor whatever he had was for the poor and the needy. The Guru was called to Lahore and was tortured to death. Gurdwara Dera Sahib near the Lahore fort commemorates Guru's martyrdom.

The cause of martyrdom of the Guru was fanaticism of Jehangir who writes in his own memories about the Guru: "So many of the simple minded Hindus, nay many foolish Muslims too, had been fascinated by his ways and teachings. He was noised about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions crowds of fools would come to him and expressed great devotion to him. This busy traffic had been carried on for three or four generations. For years the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or he should be brought into the fold of Islam."¹

The last lines indicate that the Emperor had made up his mind and rebellion of Khusru was made an excuse. Naqashhanadi Chief Syed Ahmed of Sirhindi excited the Emperor to put an end to this cursed infidel" as is clear from volume III p.193 of "*Mektubat-i-Imam Rabani*." The Portugese account as recorded in *Jehangir and Jesuits* translated by C.H. Pyne, which is a contemporary accounts confirms the Chandu's hand in the whole affair. According to Guerreiro, Guru Arjan was released in consideration of a hundred thousand crusados for which sum a wealthy Hindu became his surjty. This man in order to realize the fine subjected the Guru to "every kind of ill ussage" which brought on death.²

1. *A Short History of Sikhs*, Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, Orient Longman, 1950, p. 34.
2. *Ibid*, page 35.

Guru Hargobind (1606-1644 A.D.)

Guru Hargobind was the only son of Guru Arjan. He was born in 1595 at Guru ki Vadali (Distt. Amritsar). He resumed leadership of the Sikhs in 1606 A.D. He brought transformation of the Sikhs by following reforms :

1. He asked the Masands for presenting arms and horses in place of other things.
2. Constructed Akal Takht in 1609 where welfare of the community was discussed.
3. He fortified Amritsar and constructed Lohgarh fort on west of Amritsar.
4. He enrolled his bodyguard which subsequently became the nucleus of the future army.
5. Introduced heroic music to be sung at Darbar Sahib.

This brought transformation among the Sikhs. The Guru made them saint-soldiers. This new phenomenon alarmed the Mughal government. Jehangir imprisoned the Guru in the Gwalior fort. According to Dabistan period of imprisonment was of twelve years which does not appear to be correct. The Guru remained at Gwalior fort for some years.

After Jehangir, the Mughal Emperor his son Shahjahan ascended the throne. There was armed conflict between the Guru and Mughal forces. The main cause of conflict was that the government did not like the method of the Guru who had raised an army for self defence.

For certain minor causes, Sikhs fought four battles-Battle of Amritsar, battle of Kartarpur, battle of Gurusar and second battle of Kartarpur. This armed conflict resulted in significant consequences :

1. Invincibility of Mughal troops was broken and these battles inspired self-confidence among the Sikhs.
2. Guru's armed resistance showed the way for military organisation.

3. It gave great encouragement to the Sikhs who began to think that if they were properly organised they could prove a match to the Mughal government.

Guru Hargobind founded Kiratpur in modern District Ropar (India) and spent last years of his life there. At Kiratpur the Guru devoted himself to missionary activities. The Guru breathed his last in 1644 A.D.

According to the contemporary author of *Dabistan*, Guru Hargobind was a lovable personality-generous and had great sense of humour even in the battlefield. He foresaw the hard days and protected his followers from oppression and cruelty. According to Payne he infused military spirit among his disciples, without taking away rosary from them. He made tradition of soldier-saints in Sikh history.

Guru Har Rai (1644-1661)

Guru Har Rai the son of Baba Gurditta and grandson of Guru Hargobind was nominated for Guruship by his grand father and he became the Guru in 1644 A.D. He was born in 1630 A.D. From the very beginning he had shown a good combination of strength and tenderness. He was fond of singing Farid's lines, "All men's hearts are jewels it is wicked to distress them. If you desire to see the Beloved grieve no man's heart".

Guru Hargobind had instructed his successor not to fight any battle but keep an army. Guru Har Rai obeyed and he kept an army of 2200 soldiers but did not engage himself in any battle.

During his pontificate the Guru devoted himself to missionary work. He appointed missionaries to propagate Sikhism :

1. Bhagat Bhagwan was converted to Sikhism and sent for missionary work toward east.

2. Bhai Pheru was sent to Bari Doab.

3. Bhai Gonda was sent to western side-viz., Kabul to preach Sikhism.

4. The Guru himself undertook the missionary tours in the Malwa territory viz., the territory between the Sutlej and Jamna.

It was from Guru Hari Rai that the ancestors of the rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Jind received the blessing of royalty. A similar blessing was bestowed on Budha Singh, an ancestor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Once Aurangzeb, Mughal Emperor called the Guru to come to Delhi. The Guru sent his eldest son Ram Rai to the Mughal Court. Aurangzeb wanted to satisfy himself that there was nothing against Islam in Sikhism. Concerning Guru Nanak's line in *Asa-di-Var* which says : "The clay of a Musalman may find its way into the hand of potter who makes vessels and bricks out of it. It cries out as it burns." he asked its clarification.

Ram Rai saved the situation by substituting the word *beiman* or faithless in the place of Mussalman. Emperor was pleased and gave him *jagir* in Doon valley. Modern Dehradun was founded by him. The Guru heard the episode with pain as it showed the lack of courage and truthfulness. Thus declared him to be unfit for Guruship which was bestowed on his younger brother. The Guru breathed his last in 1661.

Guru Harkrishan (1661-1664)

Guru Harkrishan was the youngest son of Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru. He was born in 1656 A.D. and succeeded his father in 1661. His elder brother complained against him to Emperor Aurangzeb who called the Guru to Delhi. The Guru went to Delhi and stayed with Mirza Raja Jai Singh at the place which is now called Bangla Sahib. Soon after the Guru died of small pox. When asked about the next Guru he waved his hand and said "Baba Bakala" which meant that the next Guru was at village Baba Bakala, District Amritsar.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675 A.D.)

Guru Teg Bahadur was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru. He was born in 1621 at Guru ka Mehal,

Amritsar. After the death of his father he went with his mother and wife to live at Bakala where he spent his time in retirement and meditation.

Guru Harkrishan had expired and he had said "Baba Bakala" which meant the grand uncle living at village Bakala was to be the next Guru. There were many self-made Gurus in Bakala like Dhirmal who used to take offerings from unsuspecting Sikhs. Ultimately with help of Makhan Shah Lubana, who was a wealthy Sikh trader in Gujarat, the Sikhs sought out Teg Bahadur and proclaimed him the real Guru. Guru Teg Bahadur was of forty one years of age when he took up the role of Guruship. Generally the congregation accepted him as Guru but dissenters were there. When the Guru visited Darbar Sahib Amritsar doors were closed upon him and he had to return disappointed. When he went to Kiratpur he had to face the jealousy of Dhirmal, his elder brother. Tired of these bickerings he decided to purchase a piece of land five miles north west of Kiratpur from the Raja of Kahlur and founded a village after the name of his mother Nanaki viz Chak Nanaki or Mukhowal-later on it came to be known as Anandpur Sahib.

Soon after the Guru undertook long tour towards east. He visited Agra, Allahabad, Benarse, Sasram, Gaya and Patna. After leaving his family at Patna he moved on to Monghyr and Dacca. Later on he visited Assam. In this eastern region there existed a network of prosperous Sikh Sangats and monasteries all over. Some of the Sikh temples have been erected in the memory of the Guru's visit. Some of the Guru's Hukamnamahs preserved at Patna throw a flood of light to the Sangats to whom they have been addressed.

The Guru seems to have spent two years in Assam. At Dhubri he is said to have made peace between the Mughals and Assamese King. He appears to have accompanied Raja Ram Singh who stayed at Rangamati for a number of years.

After sometime the Guru returned to Anandpur Sahib via Patna. In 1669 A.D. Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor issued an

order "to demolish all the schools and temples of infidels and to put down their religious teachings and practices". Some of the most famous shrines like temple of Somnath in Gujarat, Vishwanath in Benarse, Keshwa Rai in Mathura were demolished. In 1668 A.D. all Hindu fairs were stopped throughout the empire. These measures were followed by forcible conversion of the Hindus. According to tradition Brahmins of Kashmir were made the target. These Brahmins approached the ninth Guru to protect them. The Guru after giving thought suggested to Brahmins to tell the Emperor that all would be converted to Islam if the Guru was converted. The Guru had made up his mind to sacrifice his life for this cause.

Consequently the Guru was arrested and called to show some miracle. The Guru refused and he was beheaded in 1675 A.D. at Chandni Chowk Delhi where Sisganj Gurdwara stands to commemorate the event. Guru Gobind Singh writes about this event in his *Bachitar Natak* : Thus did the Master protect the frontal mark and the sacrificial threat of the Hindus; Thus did he bring about a great event in this dark age.

Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708)

Guru Gobind Singh was the only son of Guru Teg Bahadur. He was born at Patna (Bihar) and he was very young when his father was martyred and he became the Guru. As Guru has stated in his *Bachitar Natak* in his early age, he took to hunting and used to have physical exercises to up keep the morale of the Sikhs. Growing influence of the Guru began to be considered as great menace to the neighbouring hill chiefs. Incidentally Raja of Nahan invited the Guru and he went to the bank of the Jamuna river and founded there Paonta (Modern District Nahan). At Poanta he engaged himself in the literary work.

His Literary works :

Guru Gobind Singh went through the whole epic literature of Hindus. In order to enthuse and inspire Sikhs he translated some mythological literature. In Punjabi he wrote *Chandi Chritar*

in which he showed Durga fighting against demons and that mighty heroine breaking their skulls and drinking the blood of Makhasewar, a demon. With his intellectual force, emotion, word pictures, chosen similies of war to inspire his followers he had developed a style which is unsurpassed. Some of his important works are :

1. Akal Ustat
2. Chandi Chritar
3. Bachitar Natak
4. Swayyas
5. Zafar Namah (Persian)

All these are preserved in the *Dasam Granth*.

Guru Gobind Singh's Mission

The Guru has himself written his mission of life in the following words : God says to the Guru

"I have cherished thee as my son. And created thee to go and spread my religion".

In another place he tells that God asked him to go to this world and spread righteousness and extirpate the tyrants. For this mission he created Khalsa in 1699 A.D.

On the Baisakhi day March 30, 1699 Guru Gobind Singh called a big meeting at Anandpur. When all were seated he drew out his sword and cried, "Is there anyone here who would lay down his life for Dharma". At this the whole assembly was thrown into consternation. But the Guru went on repeating this demand. Ultimately five Sikhs rose-Daya Ram, Dharm Das, Muhkam Chand, Himmatt and Sahib Chand. Thus five beloved ones were baptised. When the Guru had administered baptism to his five tried Sikhs, he stood up before them with folded hands and begged them to baptise him in the same way as he had baptised them. After the ceremony he gave following sermon.

According to Ahmad Shah Batalia an eighteen century writer :

“I wish you all to embrace one creed, follow one path obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules laid down for them in Shastras abandon them altogether and adopting the way of cooperation mix freely with one another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in Hindu religion, or adore the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga but all should believe in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of the same vessel and feel no disgust or contempt for one another.”

After creating Khalsa the Guru fought several battles against the combined forces of Hindu Hill Rajas and the Mughals. It may be noted that it was Wazir Khan, Governor of Sirhind who compelled Guru Gobind Singh to leave Anandpur. Again it was he who besieged the Guru at Chamkour where his two elder sons fell fighting and ultimately forced him to leave. Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons were killed by the orders of Wazir Khan. But the tables were soon turned after the death of Aurangzeb. Bahadur Shah, the son of Aurangzeb won his war of succession (in the battle of Jaju) with the Guru's help. He therefore, was on friendly terms with the Guru and held the Guru in high esteem. Consequently Bahadur Shah honoured the Guru by presenting him a scarf worth Rs. 60,000 (Senatai's *Gur Soba*-Guru's hukamnamah to the Sangat of Dhaul) Cordial relationship between Bahadur Shah and the Guru could naturally not be relished by the governor of Sirhind. Wazir Khan saw his own ruin in this new development. Moreover contemporary evidence proves that the Pathan who attacked the Guru at Nander was “an unknown person” and that he was in search of opportunity to put an end to the Guru's life. Thus circumstantial evidence goes to prove that Wazir Khan appears to have hand in the martyrdom of the Guru, The Guru died of wounds in 1708 A.D.

Thus came the end of that great soul who had elevated the down trodden and sacrificed his all for the suffering humanity. J D. Cunningham has paid glowing tributes to the Guru, "Success is thus not always the measure of greatness. The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and he filled them with a lofty longing for social freedom and national ascendancy. Gobind saw what was yet vital and he relumed it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames."

Guru Gobind Singh abolished the personal guruship and bestowed guruship on Guru Granth Sahib (the Adi Granth) and Khalsa collectively.

Panda Singh Bahadur

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru, the political leadership of the Sikhs came into the hands of Banda Singh whom the Guru had converted to his faith and baptised as a regular Sikh. Banda Singh was born in 1670 and his father was a Rajput ploughman living in Rajauri in Poonch (Kashmir). Banda's earlier names were Lachman Das and Madhu Das. He became Bairagi and wandered from place to place. He met Guru Gobind Singh at Nander where he was attracted by the Guru who converted him. The Guru had sent him to Punjab to continue the struggle with Mughal rulers. He had given him a drum and a banner as emblems of temporal authority, and had bestowed on him five arrows from his own quiver as a pledge of victory. Banda Singh set out for the Punjab.

After crossing Delhi Banda Singh sent letters to Sikhs at various localities and the Sikhs enthusiastically responded to his call. Then he marched towards Sirhind plundering on the way various Muslim towns where Hindus had been teased and troubled. Sikhs from the cis-Sutlej region and trans-Sutlej region joined

him near Ropar. Then they marched towards Sirhind. A fierce battle was fought in which Wazir Khan Governor of Sirhind was killed. Sirhind was plundered. The city was considered cursed one as it had witnessed the murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Banda Singh appointed his own Governor at Sirhind, Samana and various places had already been conquered by him. He assumed royal authority and struck coin in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh in 1710 A.D.

Banda Singh's clash with the royal forces was inevitable. When the Emperor heard about disturbances in Punjab, he personally brought huge army. Banda Singh fled towards hills and could not be arrested. The Emperor died soon after in 1712 A.D. and was succeeded by Jahandar Shah who ruled for a year or so and could not suppress Banda. In 1713 A.D. he was succeeded by Farrukhsiyar who adopted a stiff policy towards Banda. Huge army was collected and he was besieged at Gurdas Nangal modern district Gurdaspur. The Sikhs under him bravely stood siege for long eight months. No food grain was allowed to enter the fort. The besieged began to starve and ultimately imperialists were successful in entering the fort. They arrested the semi-starved Sikhs alongwith their leader Banda Singh. The entire lot was taken to Delhi for presentation to the Emperor. They were paraded in the streets of Delhi. An eye-witness writes, "such a crowd in bazars and lanes had rarely been seen. The Mussalmans could hardly contain themselves for joy. But the unfortunate Sikhs who had been reduced to this condition were quite happy and contented with their lot. Not a slightest sign of dejection or humiliation was visible on their faces. In fact most of them as they passed along on their camels seemed to be happy and cheerful, merily singing their sacred hymns."

One hundred Sikhs were executed every day near Chandni Chowk Delhi and after three months Banda Singh Bahadur was given the usual choice between Islam and Death. The chosen disciple of Guru Gobind Singh preferred to die. He was executed on June 9, 1716 A.D. Dr. Ganda Singh writes, "In his

zeal for emancipation of the persecuted and down-trodden he earned the blessings of the poor and the destitute whose cries have not been heard by any one for centuries past. He raised the lowest of the low to the highest position under his Government" Irvine writes, "He was the first man to deal a severe blow to the intolerant rule of the Mughals in Punjab, and break the first sod in the conquest of the province by the Sikhs."

Period of Persecution (1716-1765 A.D.)

The history of the Sikhs after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur to the establishment of Sikh rule in 1765 A.D. is a record of struggle between the Khalsa on one hand and Mughals and Darranis on the other. This period is characterised by persecution of the Sikhs and the martyrdom of a number of Sikhs due to the repressive policy of the rulers. In 1716 Abdul Samad Khan was made the Governor of Punjab as a reward of his victory over Banda Singh Bahadur. He suppressed the Sikhs. Tara Singh of village Vaan (Distt. Amritsar) fell victim to his repressive policy.

Abdul Samad Khan was succeeded by his son Zakaria Khan (1726-1745 A.D.) who proved to be one of the ablest Governors of Punjab. He adopted vigorous measures to suppress the Sikhs. Moving columns of the army were sent to villages to turn out Sikhs from the places of population. One of the noblest Sikhs Bhai Mani Singh was martyred during his rule. He was given the usual choice between Islam and death. He preferred the latter.

The death of Zakaria Khan in 1745 was followed by the war of succession between his two sons which gave opportunity to the Sikhs to organise themselves into Dal Khalsa in 1748 A.D. Shah Nawaz Khan son of Zakaria Khan invited Ahmed Shah Abdali who started his invasions in Punjab in 1748. This led to the establishment of Mir Mannu's rule (1748-53 A.D.) which is famous for persecution of Sikhs.

The invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali shattered the Mughal

Empire. He broke the Maratha power in the north by giving them a crushing defeat in the third battle of Panipat in 1761. He punished the Sikhs by killing in thousands in a single day (6 Feb , 1762) and this event is still remembered in the Sikh annals as *Ghallugharu*. But he could not suppress the spirit of the Sikhs. One of his camp followers Qazi Nur Mohammad has paid the highest tribute to the Sikh character. He calls them dog (*Sag*) and writes in his *Jang Nama* "Do not call these dogs dogs, they are lions". Destroyer of Mughal Empire, victor of Panipat felt exhausted before a few bands of Sikhs who ousted him from the Punjab. Ahmed Shah Abdali died in Afghanistan in 1771 A.D.

The Sikh Misl

It was during Misl period that various Sikh units called Misl became the masters of the Punjab after coming out successfully of a quadruple struggle for the mastery over the land. It was in this period that the capital of Lahore was captured by the Khalsa and a regular coin was struck by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.

The word "Misl" is an Arabic word meaning thereby equal or alike. According to Cunningham, Latif and Payne, as the members of every Misl were equal in status and as all the units were also equal these units began to be called as the Misl. In the words of Payne, "As membership in such a *Jatha* or group conferred political, religious and social equality on all its members they began to be designated as *misl*." There is another view also. As the term *misl* also means a file of a department, therefore, according to some authors, the various units, whose files remained with the Head Priest of Akal Takhat, started to be known as *Misl*.

With regard to the origin and growth of these *misl* this must be however be remembered that these *Misl* were not deliberately devised or knowingly adopted at one particular time but were on the other hand, gradually evolved to meet certain exigencies of the time. We know that more

than one reason led to the birth of the Dal Khalsa on the Baisakhi day of 1748, when as many as 65m all Sikh-bands agreed to join themselves into 11 main divisions, each having a distinguished title and a banner. During next two decades these 11 units of the Dal Khalsa played a very important part in making the Sikhs an organised military community, the powers of the chiefs slowly and steadily increased, their territories were extended, their fighting strength grew more and more and ultimately these units of the Dal Khalsa emerged as what we know as the *Misls*.

These *misls* were 12 in number and Cunningham puts it "The *Misls* were again distinguished by title derived from the name of the village, the district, or the progenitor of the first or most eminent chief, or from some peculiarity of the custom or of leadership". These 12 *misls* were : (1) Bhangi (2) Kanhya (3) Singh-puria or Faisalpuria (4) Ahluwalia (5) Ramgarhia (6) Sukarcharya (7) Phulkian (8) Dullewalia (9) Nakais (10) Shahids (11) Karor Singhia and the (12) Nishan wallias. Besides it should also be remembered that all the sikh *Misls* did not exist in their full strength at one and the same time. Sometimes one *Misl* gave birth to another. "An aspiring chief, first serving under one *Misl*, separated himself after some time from the original *Misl* and formed one of his own". As there was full freedom for the Sikhs to transfer their loyalty and to serve under the leader of their own choice, no difficulty was observed in forming a new *Misl* provided the leader must have the feature to attract the people for example, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who served under Nawab Kapur Singh's *Misl* Singhpuria, soon established his own *Misl*.

The *Misls* used to decide their political matters in the religious assemblies, *Dewans*, held on the occasions of Dewali and Baisakhi at Golden Temple, Amritsar. Their famous organisation, the Dal Khalsa, which offered a stubborn resistance to the Afghan hordes under Ahmad Shah Abdali was brought into existence in

the course of such an assembly. This mode of deciding important political issues has been described as *Gurmatta* system which served as a unifying force and a central league in those days. The decisions thus arrived at were binding on every Sikh. The Sikh chieftains used to sink their differences on these solemn occasions and earnestly acted upon the decisions made at their holiest place in the presence of the holy Granth.

According to Cunningham "The Sikh *Misls* were-theocratic confederate feudalism" Cunningham gives reasons for this definition. He says that it was theocratic because "God was their helper and only judge, community of faith or object was their moving principle and warlike array, the devotion to steel of Gobind was their material instrument." Besides the theocratic character becomes obvious from the following of the institution of *Gurmatta* also when the Sikhs got their orders from the Holy Granth. Secondly it was a confederate because the *Misls* were not completely independent and were loosely knit together by the *Sarbat Khalsa* and *Gurmatta*. And thirdly it was feudal because to quote "chain of dependence was acknowledged as the law and the federating chiefs partitioned their joint conquests among themselves and the chiefs divided their respective shares in the same manner among their own leaders of bands."

The Sikh *Misls* inspite of so many difficulties and draw-backs played a very important part in the history of Punjab and paved the way for the establishment of Sikh sovereignty and supermacy in the land under an organised system. In the words of Payne "Primitive though this form of Govt. was it had never the less served to hold the Sikhs together so long as they were called upon to face a common enemy." Dr. G C Narang described the value of the *Misls* and their period of supermacy saying "At any rate the Government of the *Misls* filled the gap between the end of the Mughal rule and the settled administration of Ranjit Singh." Indeed this was the *Misl* system and their period which gave rise to Ranjit Singh for establishing Sikh sovereignty.

Sikh Rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Successors (1799-1849) :

Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore in 1799 A.D. After that he unified the Punjab by conquering various Misl, old provinces of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar. However he was prevented by the British to conquer cis-Sutlej areas including Patiala, Nabha and Jind states. The treaty of Amritsar 1809 made the river Sutlej the dividing line between the British and Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

There was no religious persecution during the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Despite persecution of the Sikhs for full one century on religious grounds at the hands of Muslim fanatics there was no demolition of mosques or stoppage of *Azan*. The Maharaja extended his patronage to all religions. His secular attitude can be judged from the following anecdote. Once a number of Sikhs went to the Maharaja with the complaint that "*Azan*" (i.e. morning call for prayers from a mosque) disturbed the morning sleep of the non-Muslims and they requested that it should be stopped by an order of the government. Here the secular government of the Maharaja faced a test of its character. Maharaja shrewdly replied that he would stop *Azan* if the non-Muslims undertook to awake the Muslims for their morning prayers. The non-Muslim realised the point involved in the condition and withdrew their request.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh inscribed the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh on his coins. This indicates his humility. He attributed his victories and political power to the blessings of the Gurus and considered himself their humble servant. He was fond of saying that Guru Gobind Singh built a big drum and named it 'Ranjit Nagara' i.e. "Drum of Victory" and he too was no more than a drum of Guru Gobind Singh. This indicated his personal reverence for the Guru. So far as state affairs were concerned he gave high offices, both civil and military, to persons belonging to different religions : Faqir Azizuddin, Nurrudin, Dewan Mohkam Chand, Dewan Bhawani Dass and Bhai Ram Singh continued to be his trusted officers.

Where he patronised the reciters of the Granth, he extended patronage to the calligraphists of the Quran and gave rich alms to the Brahmins.

The Punjab of the first half of the 19th century offers pageants of military exploits which every Sikh can be well proud of. It presents unique events when ever-gushing stream of the constant invasions from the North West was rolled back. The turbulent areas of the North Western Frontier province were effectively subdued and line of forts cracted, to defend the frontier. The Sikhs erected a bulwark of defence against foreign aggression, the tide of which had run its prosperous course for the preceeding eight hundred years. New leaves were turned in the history of military exploits. The conquest of Tibet, the ahode of snow, was attempted for the first time during this period. This hazardous campaign was undertaken during the reign of Maharaja Sher Singh (1841-1843 A.D.), the son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, by his feudatory, Raja Gulab Singh and his General Zorawar Singh.

The British had been following the aggressive policy during the life time and even after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (in 1839 A.D.) Other factors were that the successors of Ranjit Singh were weak and the court was faction ridden. Two Anglo-Sikh wars were fought and the Punjab was annexed to British Empire. However Sir Hugh Gough the Commander-in-chief of the British forces who fought two wars against the Sikhs has paid highest tributes to the bravery of the Sikhs. He wrote, "Policy prevented my publically recording sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen foe and I declare were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body."

British Period :

During the British period of the Sikh history, one of the most important movement which had far reaching effects was the Singh Sabha Movement. There were three factors leading to this movement-the activities of Christian Missions, the proselytising by new Hindu organisations, known as Arya

Samaj and rationalism that came with introduction of western education. The first Singh Sabha was established in Amritsar in 1873 with following objectives :

1. To restore Sikhism to its pristine purity.
2. To edit and publish historical and religious books.
3. To propagate current knowledge using Punjabi a medium and to start magazines and newspapers in Punjabi.
4. To reform and to bring into Sikh fold those who had diverged from the right path through hearsay, anti-social activity or political bias.

In pursuit of these objectives a number of schools and colleges were opened. The most important was Khalsa College Amritsar. All these institutions brought a lot of awakening among the Sikhs.

In the early years of present century Sikh peasants driven by economic conditions in their home province sought livelihood in other Asian countries. They also began to migrate in small numbers to Canada and United States where they found employment in laying the track of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in lumber mills and mines. The white labourers did not like these Indians. Living in those free countries they organised Hindi Association with aim of freeing India. They started multilingual *ghadar* newspaper. During the war the members of Hindi Association came to Punjab with a vowed object of freeing Indian. Government of India adopted stern measure. Almost all the Ghadrites were arrested and movement was suppressed. But this brought a lot of political consciousness among the Sikhs and just after the war there started Gurdwara Reform Movement.

The aim of Gurdwara Reform Movement was to take away the management of Gurdwaras from the hands of *Mahants* who had gone corrupt and misappropriated the lands of Gurdwaras. There were following important phases of the movement :

1. Nankana Sahib massacre, 1920
2. Keys Affair, 1921
3. Guru ka Bagh Agitation, 1922
4. Jaito Morcha, 1923-24

During this movement the leaders of Indian National Congress and others applauded the sacrifices made by the Sikhs as is clear from the following :

“Father Andrews, an Christian missionary after seeing cruelties inflicted on the unarmed hymn-singing Sikhs in Guru Ka Bagh wrote, “I saw hundred of Christ crucified everyday”.

In a telegram to the Sikh leaders Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “Congratulations. The first battle of Indian freedom has been won”.

Gurdwara Act was passed in 1925 and all historic gurdwaras were brought under the management of elected body of the Sikhs.

In the Punjab Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were given the right of communal representation in 1919. This brought the majority and minority question. The Muslims were about 57% and had narrow majority over Hindus and Sikhs. The Sikhs who were 13% did not like Muslim majority rule. Therefore, during the Round Table Conference London in 1932 they demanded reorganisation of Punjab. Later on in provincial autonomy regime since 1937 and after passing of Pakistan resolution of March 1940 they demanded partition of Punjab. This demand was ultimately conceded in 1947 when India became free and Pakistan was established.

With establishment of Pakistan important Sikhs shrines like Nankana Sahib were left in Pakistan and nearly two million Sikhs were left in Pakistan by the Radcliffe Award. They subsequently migrated to India.

Sikhs in Independent India

The partition of Punjab solved the communal and minority problem in the West Punjab as all Hindu and Sikhs migrated to East Punjab. It also solved Muslim and non-Muslim problem in East Punjab as all Muslims migrated to the West Punjab. After partition Sikhs formed majority in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana. Sir percival Griffith wrote "This great concentration of very nationally minded and very martial people in a comparatively very small area must be a cause of anxiety to the Government of India." Prof Hugh Tinker wrote, "The Sikhs lost some of their richest agricultural land by partition... Their sense of grievance and isolation has led to the demand of Punjabi speaking Sikh state". After great struggle in 1955, 1960 & 1962 Punjabi speaking state was formed after merging in the Punjab the Punjabi speaking areas of Patiala and East Punjab States Union, in 1966.

The chief cause of Sikh uneasiness in free India was the resurgence of Hinduism which threatened to engulf minorities like Sikhs. The Punjabi Hindu was more aggressive than the Hindu of other provinces. Organisations notably those connected with Arya Samaj and its political counterpart, the Jan Sangh started a campaign to persuade Punjabi speaking Hindus to disown their mother tongue and adopt Hindi as their mother tongue. This added to the friction between Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab.

The Shromani Akali Dal which had been established in 1920 has been struggling to have those rights which were due to Punjab, for instance Punjab's Capital Chandigarh, river waters, Punjabi speaking areas left out of Punjab. For achievement of these rights they started peaceful agitation. Indira Gandhi's Government could not suppress the agitation. Meanwhile Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala who was arrested in connection with murder of Lala Jagat Narain but was released later on, entered Golden Temple Amritsar which had been the centre of agitation of Akalis. The Government did not like Sant Jarnail Singh's

association with Akalis. On June 4, 1984, force of 18000 men armed with tanks and field guns under the command of two major generals and guided by Lt. General K. Sunderji invaded the holy premises of Golden Temple. As a result thousands of innocent men, women and children were killed. Sant Jarnail Singh alongwith his companions heroically fell fighting against the invading Indian Army. Akal Takhat was shattered and priceless Sikh Reference library was burnt. After the operation Blue Star, the jewelled canopy set with diamonds preserved in the *Tosha Khana* was gutted. This all led to the estrangement between the Government and Sikhs.

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